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### UPDATE

#### TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (TPP)

With the withdrawal of the USA from the TPP, the remaining eleven participants<sup>1</sup> in the negotiations on this trade agreement met in Sydney in September with a view to pursuing the agreement without the USA.

Australian Trade Minister Steve Ciobo, called for minimal changes to the text, but this appears to have been rejected by the other negotiators. Instead, they have agreed to suspend controversial clauses on medicine monopolies; and some governments want to renegotiate other clauses. This vindicates community concerns that many TPP clauses are not in the public interest.

*Nikkei Asian Review* quotes the Japanese chief negotiator as saying that some governments had only reluctantly agreed to parts of the text in order to gain access to the USA market. These include the controversial clauses on the three-year extension of data protection monopolies for biologic medicines, which would delay the availability of cheaper versions of these medicines. This part of the text will only be resurrected if the USA decides in future to re-join the agreement.

*Nikkei* reports that Canada and Mexico want to suspend several parts of the TPP text to prevent the USA from using them as a model in renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); and that other

governments, including Malaysia and Vietnam, want to renegotiate other parts of the text, e.g., on government procurement and state-owned enterprises. There is no agreement on investment rules, copyright and other issues. Further negotiations are planned for late November in Japan with a view to completion in November.

Dr Patricia Ranald of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) said the harmful impacts of TPP clauses on health had again been [demonstrated in the open letter](#) from 67 national and international health and consumer groups, including the Public Health Association of Australia, the World Public Health Association and Médecins Sans Frontières published prior to the meeting. The letter called for complete renegotiation of the clauses on medicines and on foreign investor rights to by-pass national courts and sue governments in international tribunals.

'It is clear from these reports that some governments recognise that many clauses in the TPP are not in their national interests. Any renegotiation of the TPP will be a long and painful process, which may not produce an outcome. We call the Australian government not to waste further time and re-sources on trying to resurrect the TPP but, instead, to develop fairer trade policies'.

Source: Dr P. Ranald, Convener, [Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network](#). 6th Sept. 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam.

## UPDATE ANTI-FRACKING IN COLORADO

Five years ago I wrote about my 'Grail' work in Colorado resisting the oil and gas industry as they fracked their way into my town, Longmont, and other front-range communities. My little group of activists - called [Our Longmont](#) - spearheaded an effort to get bi-partisan voter approval to ban fracking within the city limits (*see Bulletin Vol.2-6, November 2012*). We got it in 2012 across party lines, but the ban was eventually overturned by the Colorado Supreme Court. However, it kept Longmont frack-free until now.

I want to acknowledge the myriad ways my own involvement in Grail programs prepared me for this work - everything from understanding systems analysis to learning how to facilitate participatory meetings.

Since 2012, other nearby front-range communities, inspired by Longmont's example, have initiated their own forms of resistance to aggressive oil and gas development. When we began, most people did not even know what fracking was, that it took scarce water permanently out of the water cycle and that home-owners in Colorado do not usually own the mineral rights underneath their own property. Further, we activists had to overcome misleading TV ads, fake 'grassroots' groups, and politicians subsidized by oil and gas interests.

The struggle and tactics have changed over the years and especially after an explosion this past spring in Firestone killed two men as it blew up a house that was too close to an improperly capped old gas flow line. It turns out there is no record kept of where such flow lines are, let alone a plan to test them for leakage. Before the Firestone explosion, most of us had worried about the various forms of air

and water pollution that cause breathing problems and cancer, even to the point of affecting the birth weight of newborn children in proximity to wells. Now we worry about climate change being speeded up by burning fossil fuels and by vulnerabilities in infrastructure.. Since the Longmont case was settled on the basis of what is legal rather than on what is safe, short-range profitability still trumps our long-range welfare - as Coloradans and as a species inter-connected with all of creation.

There is still work to be done, but I, personally, am worn out from this particular struggle. Going forward, I find myself morphing into a 'renewable energy' advocate rather than continuing to fight the frackers. I might be moved to local acts of civil disobedience, if it were done in the Standing Rock spirit of love, but so far I have not found a group here where activism and spirituality co-exist as expressions of 'the One'. In the meantime I am participating in the Sierra Club's *Ready for 100* campaign, that is pushing businesses, mayors and governors to commit to 100% renewable electric energy by 2030.

Ultimately, though, I think market forces may be on our side. Affordable renewable technology and storage are available now. Jobs in that sector will be plentiful as we make the inevitable transition. Furthermore, over-leveraged oil conglomerates are in deep financial trouble, even if this is not yet acknowledged publicly. The grid, with its vulnerability to cyber-attacks and breakdowns, could be replaced by local production of energy. Some-thing about that bottom-up organizational structure appeals to me in our current political climate.

*Source: Judith Blackburn (Grail Colorado, USA).*

## **INTER-SCHOOL DEBATING IN EAST NEW BRITAIN**

### **A promising awareness-raising project**

Adrianna George, chairperson of The Grail in East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea, is the Coordinator of the Language and Literature Department of Malabunga Secondary High School, Rabaul. She has initiated a project of inter-school debating, involving students of Years 11 and 12 in fifteen high schools in the Province. The proposed topics are all current issues of great importance, not only to the people of Papua New Guinea but also to their fellow Pacific Islanders and, indeed, planet Earth, such as:

- Rural-to-urban migration
- Strengthening cultural ties in times of rapid change
- Sea-bed mining

- Women in Parliament
- Free universal education
- Nuclear energy
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Land ownership and tenure
- National debt.

This program challenges young people to research and reflect on major questions of justice, cultural values and change, ecological responsibility, solidarity and peace. It also provides opportunities for them to extend the challenge to others – their fellow students, teachers and families.

*Source: Adrianna George, East New Britain Students Academic Challenges, 2017.*

## **THE LANGUAGE OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS: A REVEALING ANALYSIS**

The language of finance relies heavily on water metaphors, which are deeply misleading. It is unlikely that this is done deliberately, but its consequences have been, and remain, quite devastating.

These water metaphors have many variants. Participants talk routinely of ‘capital flows’ (which is the rate of transactions) and ‘financial liquidity’ (the willingness of investors to participate in markets). Economists speculate about equilibrium — indeed one popular economic theory is General Equilibrium Theory. This is the notion that markets should be allowed to find their level in much the same fashion as water does.

Money can be channeled into investment, or sources of capital can dry up. There are colloquial phrases, such as the ‘trickle-down effect’ (which means that wealth at the top will make its way to the lower levels); and ‘a rising tide raises all boats’ (meaning that, when the economy is doing well, everyone benefits).

By creating the linguistic illusion that money is a fluid, the impression is created that resources and capital are flexible, to be moved around easily - as long as barriers are

removed. The barriers to this fluid are, of course, governments. Hence, claims about the need to ‘deregulate’ the financial system in order to create greater ‘efficiencies’ in the flow of money and encourage capital to find its own appropriate level without interference. An image of a river obstructed by a system of locks and weirs is conjured up. It is hard to think of a more contradictory notion.

For one thing, governments necessarily set the fundamental rules of money, from the fine details that determine whether paper money is legitimate, to the level of bank capital reserves or the legal strictures that apply to creditors and borrowers. Governments cannot get out of the way; they are central to determining how transactions occur. It is why, in the global financial crisis of 2007-08, all eyes turned to governments when the financial system almost collapsed. In the end, even the most libertarian of traders knew that it was governments that set the rules.

These unavoidable facts were concealed, however, by the water metaphors that had become entrenched in the language of finance. Governments did reduce their regulation and oversight of the markets, leaving the traders to

make up their own rules. This resulted in the establishment of a global market that superseded national governments.

The finance sector is only one of a number of different sectors in our societies, such as management, bureaucracy and some areas of academia, that are plagued by a limited and/or deceptive use of language.

What they have in common is a lack of awareness, or a willing-ness to ignore, what

## **THOSE MOST IMPACTED ARE THOSE WHO LEAST CAUSE IT The efforts of those bearing the brunt of global warming**

While we in the West debate the merits of climate science, in large parts of Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands climate change is a daily reality. Many of these communities rely on fishing and farming for their subsistence — but unpredictable weather and extreme weather events are wreaking havoc.

I have just returned to Australia from a visit to Africa. Widespread malnutrition and, in many cases, starvation is sweeping through Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, South Sudan, Malawi - and Yemen. The crisis is being fuelled by conflict in certain areas while rising food prices and a large scale drought are affecting these areas as a whole.

East Africa was hit by a super-charged El Niño in 2016 — a warming of temperatures on the surface of the Pacific Ocean. While dry spells are not uncommon for the region, abnormally high temperatures have intensified both the severity and the length of the drought. For farming and pastoral communities the effects have been devastating.

With over 30 years of involvement in global affairs, I have never seen anything on this scale. Millions of men, women and children are, literally, desperate for food and water. Released just last month, the Disaster Alley Report warns that, if left unchecked, global warming will cause increasingly regular and severe humanitarian crises, not unlike the one taking hold in East Africa. Images of droughts, famines, and mass migration are what we must now conjure up when thinking about climate change.

their words are doing. Looking closely at word use can prove extremely revealing. In the case of finance language, what we see mostly is deceptive-ness. Exposing the tricks can help us get a healthier understanding of the true role of the world of money.

*Source: David James, Business Manager, [Business Advantage PNG](#) in 'Comment', Eureka Street, Vol. 27/11, 4 June 2017.*

The world's poor are bearing the brunt of global warming yet they have done the least to cause it. African countries have some of the lowest carbon emission rates in the world. But their fields are drying up and their pastureland is vanishing. This issue, little understood, is one of the great injustices of our time.

The communities already being impacted understand the urgent threat posed by global warming and they are banding together to find solutions. People are using their ingenuity and resourcefulness to harness solutions. While countries like India and Chile are leading the way on renewables, whole communities in Kenya are being powered by solar panels.

In the Pacific, people are finding novel ways to replenish diminishing fish stocks and grow cyclone-resilient crops. In 2016, political leaders from the 47 countries most vulnerable to climate change, including many situated in the Pacific, declared their commitment to achieving carbon-neutral, climate-resilient economies as rapidly as possible.

In Laudato Si', Pope Francis' statement on the environment, he invites all of us to hear 'both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor'. Calls from many communities have never been louder and it is time for us to re-imagine what we can and should do to respond to ensure a safe future for all.

*Source: Paul O'Callaghan, Caritas Australia, 10 July 2017. Edited A Healey.*

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